

CHINESE NEW YEAR VACATIONS BECAME VERY POPULAR AGAIN



Chinese citizens have resumed travel intensively during the Lunar New Year according to Fliggy, Alibaba Group's online travel platform, which claims that long-haul travel bookings in China increased fivefold on the platform this holiday period with Thailand and Maldives being some of the most popular destinations for Chinese New Year Vacations.

After three years without leaving their hometowns, **millions of Chinese citizens have taken advantage of the Lunar New Year week to visit family and friends, and go sightseeing.**

The Year of the Rabbit has therefore got off to a good start for China's travel industry and the figures provided by China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism prove it: more than 308 million trips were made in China during this holiday.

Passenger travel during the annual peak travel period reached 892 million between Jan. 7 and Jan. 29, up 56% from 2022, a transportation department official told reporters, but down 46.9% from the same period in 2019.

In this sense, there has been a recovery of 88.6% of pre-pandemic travel levels and 375,840 million yuan (about 51 billion Euro) of expenditure has been generated.

This has been reflected in long-haul travel bookings within China, which typically include transportation, accommodation, sightseeing, visa service and entry to tourist sites, up 500% year-on-year on Fliggy, Alibaba Group's online travel platform.

Flight sales from mainland China to Hong Kong increased by 2,200%, with tourists from Shanghai, Hangzhou and Beijing leading the way.

However, China's sudden easing of Covid-19 restrictions was followed by a wave of infections among the population of 1.4 billion. **Some experts had warned that Chinese New Year travel, known before the pandemic as the world's largest migration of people, would trigger a wave of infections in rural areas less equipped to deal with it.**

Last week, however, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention said there was no significant rebound in cases during the vacations, the number of severe Covid-19 cases and deaths had dropped, and no new mutant strains had been identified.

Some global experts said the data reported by China on coronavirus-related deaths may greatly underestimate the true total because it excludes those who die at home, while some doctors said they were discouraged from citing Covid-19 as a leading cause of death.

Date: 2023-02-06

Article link:

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